

Grace Works, Part 3 - Romans 4:9-12 - September 25th, 2011

- This is part three of a series titled "Grace Works." Here-to-fore, the Apostle Paul has been rising from the pages of scripture to teach on grace.
- Actually, if you were to put a caption under chapter four in this intense book of Romans, it could simply read something like; "it's all of grace."
- In verses 1-8, Paul has brought up Abraham and David in order to demonstrate that God's credited righteousness comes by grace, not works.

4. When I understand that it's unconditional (Verses 9-10)

(9) Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. (10) Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before!

- v9 Paul asks if saying Abraham's faith was credited to only the circumcised Jews, or is it also credited to the uncircumcised Gentiles as well.
- v10 He answers this by asking and answering two more questions about how Abraham's faith was credited to him "before" he was circumcised.
- The Apostle Paul is going to great lengths in communicating how that Abraham's faith being credited to him as righteousness had no conditions.

- The grace of God, in concert with the righteousness from God, is unconditional, as evidenced by Abraham receiving it prior to the circumcision.
- In other words, there were no conditions that had to be met in order for Abraham, by faith, to be the recipient of God's credited righteousness.
- This would have been a smack in the face of these smug Jews in Rome, by virtue of the supreme importance in their being of the circumcision.

- Lest we be too quick in being too harsh towards them for this, we would all do well to check our own hearts as it relates to this type of mindset.
- If the truth were known, we're all prone to the thinking that being the recipients of God's grace is predicated upon our meeting certain conditions.
- Just as they were hanging the hat of their salvation on the rack of their circumcision, so too do we do the same in our affiliation or denomination.

- I would suggest that we can become just as guilty as they were, thinking the grace of God, the blessing of God, comes vis-a-vis the conditional.
- The litmus test by which to measure whether or not I'm doing this is to ask this question; "absent my circumcision, as it were, where would I be?"
- Would I be less righteous, less blessed, less of a believer? If the answer is yes, then it's a good indication that I see God's love as conditional.

- Perhaps you'll indulge me for just a moment because I deem it necessary, by the Holy Spirit, to take it a step further as it relates to this issue.
- If this attitude takes up residence in my Christian life, it will be characterized by a spiritual pride, and come packaged with a spiritual superiority.
- Just as the circumcised Jews fancied themselves as being superior over the Gentiles, who were not, so too do we look down on others as well.

One commentator captured this best when they wrote that; "Paul has turned the Jew's boast upside down. It is not the Gentile who must come to the Jew's circumcision for salvation; it is the Jew who must come to a Gentile faith, such faith as Abraham had long before he was circumcised."

Another commentator connects the dots to us as Christians when he writes; "The sacraments and ceremonies of the Church, useful when viewed in their proper light, become ruinous when perverted into grounds of confidence. What answers well as a sign, is a miserable substitute for the thing signified. Circumcision will not serve for righteousness, nor baptism for regeneration"

5. When I have the faith to believe God (Verses 11-12)

(11) And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. (12) And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

- v11 Abraham received the sign of circumcision while he was uncircumcised so he's the father of all who believe but haven't been circumcised.
- v12 Paul says that he's also the father of the circumcised who not only are, but also walk in the footsteps of the faith that Abraham had before.
- If you're scratching your head wondering how in the world this applies to us, don't feel bad, because the Holy Spirit will give us understanding.

- In order to get our minds around this, it's incumbent upon us to see this as God's grace coming before any ritual, and not because of any ritual.
- It's for this reason, Abraham received that which he had by faith, while he was still uncircumcised, so now all can walk in those footsteps of faith.
- If this were not so, we'd all have to do what the Galatians were told they had to do, which was to become circumcised, before coming to Christ.

Galatians 5:1-4 NIV It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. (2) Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. (3) Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. (4) You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

- This falling away from grace can come under the banner of doing something, namely, performing some ritual like baptism, is simply not Biblical.
- It's called by a couple of different names today, one of which is "Baptismal Regeneration," and the other of which is called; "Lordship Salvation."
- The common denominator with both of these false doctrines is that the "uncircumcised sinner's," faith in Christ alone is insufficient for salvation.

- Baptismal Regeneration says that you must do something to be saved and Lordship Salvation says you must stop doing something to be saved.
- This is why the Apostle Paul, by the Holy Spirit says, that it was by Abraham's faith alone, by God's grace alone, that he or any of us, are saved.
- Were this not the case, then so too would it not be grace. It would be works, and it's only grace that works, because none of our works, works!

William Newell - Abraham just *believed* God: gave Him the honor of being a God of truth. And be it so that God saw that one day He would make Abraham as righteous in glory as He in that past day reckoned him in grace; yet it remains that God reckoned him what he was not, as yet, in experience; and that Abraham stood before God thus righteous *the moment he believed!* And not what Abraham would become, but what Christ would do on the cross for him was the ground of God's reckoning!